



Cold Salads For Hot Summer Days

When the weather's just too hot to cook, do yourself a favor: learn to use your microwave for more of your cooking chores. Cooking meats and vegetables for salads in your microwave is quick and your kitchen stays cool. Even treats like a cake or brownies can be made without heating up that furnace of an oven!

Here's a few shortcuts for fixing cold summer salads. Use these techniques for your own favorite salads or try the two recipes here. The chicken fruit salad has an unusual flavor, and was a favorite at a recent picnic!

Hardcooked Eggs

You can't hardboil eggs in their

shells in your microwave unless you have a steamer or special microwave egg cooker. However, eggs can be hard cooked in a microwave when you want them to chop for a salad. Break eggs into custard cups, or use a microwave muffin pan (without holes in the bottom). Pierce the yolks with a knife to prevent bursting.

Cover with plastic wrap and cook on high for 30-45 seconds per egg. If your oven has medium power, use this instead, cooking them for one-two minutes each on medium (50,5). The lower power level cooks them a little more evenly without risking rubbery (overcooked) white areas.

Microwaving Pasta

Large amounts of pasta are best,

cooked on your range. A microwave just takes too long to heat quantities of water greater than five-six cups. You can use your microwave for pasta in smaller quantities though.

Start with hot tap water, and reduce the amount of water used. I use one cup pasta to two cups water, and about a half teaspoon salt. Combine pasta, salt, and water in a large casserole. Cover and cook on high until it boils (5-6 minutes). Stir, then reduce power to low (30,3 defrost). Cook on low for about as long as the directions call for on the box, until the pasta is tender. Drain and rinse with cold water immediately to prevent stickiness.

The microwave doesn't shorten the cooking time, because it takes time for the dehydrated pasta to reabsorb water to get tender. However, your microwave uses less energy than a range burner on high power.

Microwaving Poultry Parts

Chicken or turkey pieces cooked in your microwave will be very tender and juicy (unless you overcook them!) Skin pieces if desired to reduce fats. Cook, covered, on medium high (70,7) for 10 minutes per pound. Turn meat over halfway through the cooking time—see the cooking steps in the

chicken salad recipe below. Let stand, covered, five minutes.

Tuna Pasta Salad

1 cup uncooked elbow macaroni
2 cups hot water
½ teaspoon salt
1 egg
2 sliced green onions
1 stalk celery thinly sliced
2 small carrots thinly sliced
1 ½-ounce can chunk tuna
⅓ cup mayonnaise
3 tablespoons yogurt
2 teaspoons spicy brown mustard

1. Stir hot water, salt and macaroni together in a two-quart casserole. Cover and cook on high for 5-6 minutes until boiling.

2. Stir. Reduce power and cook on low (defrost, 30,3) for 8-9 minutes more, until the macaroni is tender. Immediately rinse with cold water to stop the cooking and keep the macaroni from getting sticky. Set aside.

3. Break the egg into a small custard cup. Pierce the yolk with the tip of a knife and cover with plastic wrap or a small plate. Cook on medium (50,5) for 1½ to 2 minutes until barely hard cooked. Let stand to finish cooking and cool slightly. Chop when cool enough to handle.

4. In a serving or mixing bowl, combine pasta, chopped egg, sliced vegetables and tuna and mix gently. Stir mayonnaise, yogurt and mustard together in a small bowl until smoothly mixed. Pour over salad and mix. Chill until serving time. Garnish with tomato wedges, lettuce or parsley. Serves 4-6.

Chicken Fruit Salad

3 whole chicken breasts (2 pounds)
1½ cups seedless green grapes
1 15-ounce can pineapple chunks
2 red apples
¼ cup toasted slivered almonds
½ cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon soy sauce
2 tablespoons pineapple juice

1. Cut chicken breasts in half and remove skin if desired. Place upside down in a flat dish putting thicker parts of the meat on the outside of the container. Cover with a lid or plastic wrap. Cook on medium high (70,7) for 10 minutes.

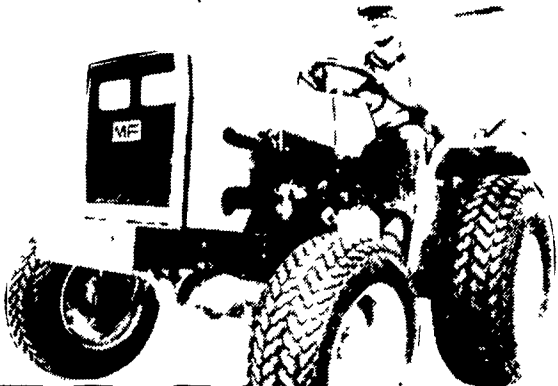
2. Turn meat over, putting larger or least cooked pieces on the outside and in the corners of the container. Recover and cook on medium high (70,7) for 10 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes, then remove meat from pan to cool. Remove meat from bones and cut into chunks.

3. Drain pineapple chunks, reserving juice in a bowl. Cut apples into quarters, remove seeds. Cut quarters into bite sized pieces. Soak apple pieces in pineapple juice for a few minutes to prevent browning. Mix chicken chunks, fruit and almonds in a mixing or serving bowl.

4. In a small bowl blend mayonnaise, soy sauce and 2 tablespoons pineapple juice until smooth. Pour over salad, mix gently, chill for several hours before serving for flavors to blend. Serves 6.

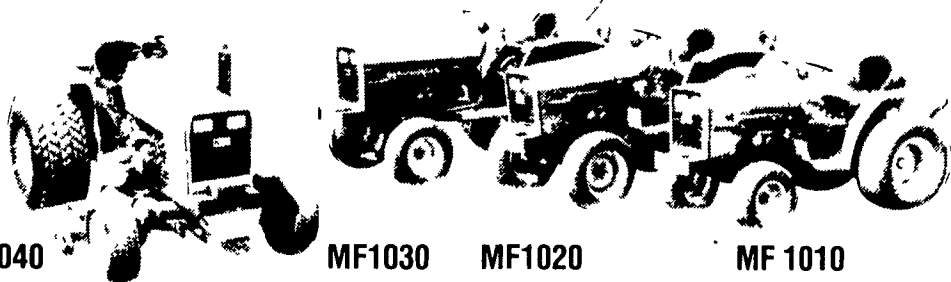
Note: The cooking times above are for microwaves with 600-700 watts of cooking power. For 500-600 W, add 10 seconds to each minute; for 400-500 W, add 20 seconds to each minute.

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Callahan promoted to county agent

UNIVERSITY PARK — Thomas A. Callahan has been promoted to associate extension agent in Wayne County, where he has served as an assistant agent for the past five years.

"Tom has displayed strong leadership in developing outstanding educational programs in areas such as 4-H teen leadership, 4-H county council, 4-H horticulture programs, commercial fruit and vegetable production, no-till sod seeding, use of brassica crops, high tensile fencing and pesticide certification," says County Extension Director John Creighton. "He is the first agent in Pennsylvania to establish a no-till test plot of alfalfa and perennial ryegrass, a mixture drawing

considerable statewide interest.

Callahan earned two degrees from Penn State—an associate degree in forestry in 1976 and a bachelor of science in horticulture in 1980. He is currently completing work for a master's degree in horticulture.

Callahan is a member of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, State Horticulture Association, Pennsylvania Farmers Association, both the National and Pennsylvania Associations of County Agricultural Agents, the National and Pennsylvania Associations of Youth 4-H Agents and Gamma Sigma Delta, a national agricultural fraternity.

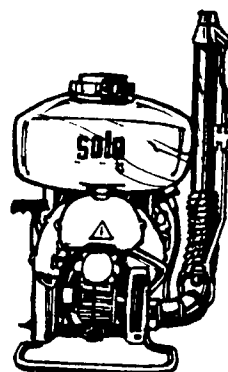
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